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even those coöperate abundantly who find fault with what happens, and who try to oppose it and hinder it: for the world has need even of such men as these." This book will not have failed if it leads men to study for themselves the central figure of history, who in other days was called Messiah, Son of Man and Son of God—names which have become for the modern world little more than compressed parables whose meaning has been lost—and who still comes to us out of the dim and mysterious past and utters that word of command which has so often fallen on ears that are dull of hearing.

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MYSTICISM AND THE CREED. By W. F. Cobb, D.D. London. Macmillan & Co., 1914. Pp. XXVIII, 112.

The value and the liberty of interpretation of creeds form the subject of keen discussion in all churches at the present day, even in those which do not recite formulas of belief in public worship. Dr. Cobb's very interesting book is a contribution to this discussion from a point of view which seems to be almost equally removed from that of ordinary orthodoxy and that of the usual type of broad churchman. He agrees, however, on the practical question, with the demand for latitude of interpretation. The creeds should not lightly be changed, since they sum up and hand on the spiritual insight of generations; yet a fixed form is an anomaly in a world of constant change and progress. The legitimate claims of tradition and freedom can only be reconciled by allowing a very wide liberty of interpretation of the received formulas. Dr. Cobb's own interpretation is that of a thorough mystic. He calls upon us to regard the spiritual significance of the articles of faith as the fundamental one; only so he thinks can we reach a standpoint which, being deeper than the merely historical, is able to make us independent of the results of historical research. The statements of the creed are then to be taken as symbols of eternal spiritual truths. Indeed Dr. Cobb would hold that only the "twice-born" are capable of a real understanding of the creed. The mystic alone has the true standpoint. "Like St. Paul he has had his Damascus day, and ever afterwards that experience is the focus which determines the worth of things. For the voice which has spoken within is a voice that had summoned into con-

sciousness the love for all living things which heretofore had slumbered, and before Love all other faculties bow their head."

This method of interpretation is applied to all the articles of the Apostles' creed. Dr. Cobb's pages give ample evidence of wide reading and of the activity of an imaginative if sometimes fanciful intelligence. It is clearly impossible for a reviewer to follow him throughout his course, and we may perhaps take the Virgin Birth as a representative example of his treatment. Regarded as a physical event the miraculous birth has no religious value. Not until it has been "raised to the peerage of symbols" can it take rank as a religious fact. Dr. Cobb finds in it a parable of the regeneration of the soul. "Where the soul, figured as Eve, listens to the seductions of sense, *i. e.*, of Life as seeking to act apart from the Whole, she becomes from generate degenerate and must become regenerate, *i. e.*, she must become purified or single-pointed, and then perfect her purification by giving birth to the Christ through the Spirit who is her true husband. Eve must become Mary, and her Son the St. George bruising the serpent's head. The soul is first the daughter, then the spouse, and finally the mother of God." Indifference to the historical is one of the well established characteristics of mysticism, and Dr. Cobb evidently possesses this characteristic in a marked degree. It is remarkable that a large book dealing with a document which contains, *prima facie*, a series of historical statements should give so little space to a discussion of the evidence for those statements. It is in many cases difficult to discover whether Dr. Cobb believes them to be historical or no. It is very easy to discover that Dr. Cobb does not greatly care. Some remarks at the beginning of the book lead us to think that he would exclude the miraculous; on the other hand he is careful to say that the analogy between Spirit and Nature make it probable that spiritual truths will have symbolical expressions in the natural order.

Even Theologians who have no desire to defend an extreme traditionalism will probably feel that so complete a "transcendence" of the historical is not possible for Christianity. The very creed upon which our author is commenting is a standing witness to the fact that Christianity is a historical religion. It is not only a collection of maxims for mystics, it implies a certain view of the world and of the position of the individual soul in it; and this view cannot be divorced from belief in some historical

events of supreme importance. The peculiar claims of Christianity are bound up with the assertion of the uniqueness of the historical Christ and the uniqueness of the divine impulse behind the beginnings of his religion. It is possible that Dr. Cobb would be able to agree with these remarks in principle, but I cannot help regarding it as a defect in his book that he has not made his position clear in this matter, and it is certain that there are many pages which suggest, even to a careful reader, a different view. Nevertheless, in spite of its dangerous one-sidedness, there is obvious truth in the main contention of the book. The merely historical is not yet religion. Not until historical fact becomes the vehicle of spiritual and eternal truth does it obtain full religious significance.

It appears to be a defect inherent in the mystical temperament to be unable to appreciate the spiritual values which are connected with the state and social institutions. Dr. Cobb has a very low opinion of both Church and State in their "empirical" manifestations, though he is full of enthusiasm for the ideal Church. The actual church appears to him to be little better than a necessary evil. History shows, he thinks, that ecclesiastical organizations almost inevitably degenerate into institutions resting upon force, and, so far from being reflections of the ideal church, become an "instrument of Satan," a means of testing and perfecting of the truly spiritual. The state is even more strongly condemned. It is contrary to "that an-archism which is the necessary fruit of the Christian life." It is a "monument of evil, an excrescence on the community it oppresses under due forms of law."

Many other views expressed by Dr. Cobb invite discussion and criticism. He has some highly controversial remarks on the relations between Christianity, Judaism and Gnosticism. Attention too should be directed to his very interesting defence of the theory of Re-incarnation. It is probable that no one but the author will be able to read his book with complete agreement; but the whole work is a frank statement of an individual point of view by a man of deeply spiritual mind. Many readers who are distracted by the voices of religious controversy will doubtless find in some of Dr. Cobb's reflections indications of a way to a level of religious life where there is peace.

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